

# Lester and Fern Bartlett

## Oral History

February 3, 2012

CD #450

Recorded and transcribed by Linda S. Wilson

Linda (LSW): I am at the home of Lester and Fern Bartlett of Tridell, Utah. I appreciate the opportunity to come into your home and talk with you about old times and fun times we need to keep track of and to remember.

You have given me a typed copy of your biographical information. I have included it in this record:

*Lester was born February 12, 1922 in Tridell, Utah, to George H. Bartlett and Clara Louesa Bingham Bartlett. George was born July 8, 1871 in Mountain Dell, Utah. Clara was born April 19, 1878 in Huntsville, Utah. Lester is the youngest child of twelve children.*

*Fern was born February 3, 1923 (Happy Birthday today!), in Tridell, Utah, to Robert Lynn Cook and Roselee Terry. Robert was born August 8, 1885 in Wallsburg, Utah. Roselee was born July 8, 1889 in Fairview, Utah. There were nine children.*

*Fern and Lester have seven children: Joyce, Nina, Fred Lester, Rulon Cook, Boyd Lynn, Neil George and Cathy.*

LSW: Lester are you the oldest, middle or youngest in your family?

Lester: I am the youngest. I come along at the end – I am the 12<sup>th</sup> one.

LSW: How about you Fern?

Fern: I was kind of in the middle. I had one older brother and four older sisters, then myself and then two younger sisters. And there was another baby that didn't live very long.

LSW: When I was writing the Tridell History one thing that stuck out in my mind was the large families that people had. I suppose that was because of farming.

Lester: In years past it seemed you had larger families. Now they don't have time for families, or something.

LSW: That is probably right. What was your life like as a child? I know that you grew up in Tridell and lived here your whole life.

Lester: Well no, not my whole life. I was born in Tridell in a log house.

LSW: Where was it located?

Lester: It was located in the west dell just about straight west of where Brian and Jeannie Smith live. I don't remember much about that place. We moved from there to the center dell when I was about two or something like that, so I don't remember much about where I was born. Then we lived in the center dell until 1925 and we moved to Vernal. I was there all during the school years until I graduated from High School.

LSW: So you went to school in Vernal. What elementary school did you go to?

Lester: Central School. There was Maeser and others, but Central was the only one in Vernal at that time. I went to Uintah High school that is where I graduated.

LSW: So you were in the old buildings.

Lester: Ya, in the old buildings that don't exist any longer. I graduated in 1940 – I went to Uintah High School.

LSW: How about you Fern?

Fern: I was born here in Tridell. I lived on a farm. My dad was a farmer. I grew up learning how to do outside work as much as the inside. I did a lot of help on the farm. We had a lot of girls and only one brother, so we girls had to help with the farm, hauling hay and milking cows and whatever. But I went to school here in Tridell School all through the eighth grade. Then I went to Altera High School. I graduated in 1941 from there.

LSW: What are some special childhood memories that you can remember?

Lester: Well, one of the memories that sticks in my mind quite good is – dad bought the saw mill up on Mosby Mountain – every spring, as soon as school was out, all the family moved up to the saw mill. We were up there all summer long until school started in the fall.

LSW: Did you live in a cabin or a tent?

Lester: We had a house there. The first time it was just a cabin but when we moved the mill into Paradise then we had a good house there. That was something always to look forward to – so I never remember a hot summer until the mill burnt down in the spring of 1940 and we had to come down here and set up another one. It was hot down there for me, the first summer.

LSW: Where was the mill located when you moved it back down off the mountain?

Lester: Up on the hill where Bishop McKee's barn is now. It was there for maybe twenty years, something like that, and then my brother sold it and moved it. I kind of left the sawmill business for a while and drove a school bus for four years. Then I got a chance to go to work for another saw mill so I went back to the saw mill. I have been around sawmills all my life, the last few years, working as a mechanic, keeping the sawmill going and the trucks going and things like that.

LSW: Fern – what about your childhood memories?

Fern: Oh, there were a lot of them. I remember especially, it seemed like the holidays I remember most was the Fourth of July and Christmas. I remember the fourth of July we always had a celebration here in Tridell. We would have a place where you could buy soda pop and ice cream and popcorn and candy bars and everything was a nickel. If you had a quarter you could get about one of everything they had. And then we would have races and all kinds of things. Then Christmas was always special. We didn't have a lot – we were lucky to have maybe one gift each. We always had a tree, we always had it decorated. Sometimes it would just be a cedar tree because we couldn't get up high enough on the mountain to get a pine tree. But we always had a tree. We would have to get up in the morning on Christmas Day and my parents would put a sheet or something around the tree, so we couldn't see it until after we had chores done and breakfast over with, and then we would open our gifts and spend our Christmas – but they were special.

Then I remember some of the Indian people who lived here – a few of them that were friendly and used to come and want bread or something like that and then some would come and bring their family. They were always friendly Indians; we never had any problems otherwise with them. We grew up here – the house that Rousseau's live in now was the house I lived in from the time I was about ten years old until after I was married.

LSW: Who were some of the important people in your lives?

Lester: That is hard to say. I think a lot of my school teachers were very important. My fourth grade teacher. Right strict. I am quite sure I learned quite a bit from her.

LSW: What was her name?

Lester: White, Miss White – She was up in years and never married, she was about 40 years. I might be way off on that, but then she was quite old when she married. I remember another, probably in the fifth grade, a teacher that was, Frank Slaugh, a very good teacher. He could explain things so that you knew it. And of course, high school teachers, there is so many of them – I remember I spent quite a lot of time in the wood shop. I've always been one to build things with wood. Of course I have done a lot of mechanical work too. All during Junior High and the High School, except my senior year, I took a class in wood work. I enjoyed that and made a lot of things for the house. Some things didn't last too long and others have.

LSW: How about you Fern?

Fern: Well I had some good teachers here in Tridell. Margaret Bartlett is the one I had first. Then there was Alice Morrill and then there was Mabel Haub that taught here. I did spend one year in Vernal. I was in the fourth grade. I had the same teacher as Lester,

but I didn't know him then. Each grade was in a different room. He was one year ahead of me. I remember Miss White too. She was a single lady but heard she got married afterwards and had one child.

LSW: I think we have covered a little bit about what talents and skills that you had early on. Lester, yours would have been wood working. You had a knack for that and you enjoy it – also mechanics. Are there any others? I think you have to have a talent to be a mechanic.

Lester: You can't be a mechanic unless you want to get your hands dirty and greasy and figure out how things work and how to repair them and get them running like they should. That has been a joy to me. The last few years here, I have repaired a lot of lawn mowers and tillers and stuff like that. I am getting so now that I can't stoop over to do that kind of work.

Another thing, when I was up at the saw mill, like I said, we stayed there all summer long, we did a lot of fishing, either Dry Fork creek or the Twin Lakes or someplace like that.

Another thing I remember, the wages that were paid then, Dad used to pay a hired man \$2 a day. If he boarded himself, he got \$2.50 a day. If we had to furnish his meals it was only \$2 a day. They used to come and work for that, a lot of guys were like I was; they enjoyed the mountain so they would come there to work when there were probably other jobs down in the valley that paid better. I don't think farmers paid any better, but there were probably those that did. But it was something I looked forward to. I was looking forward to working in the winter up there at the mill, but I never got a chance when I graduated from High School; that is when the mill burned down. They used to stay up there and work at least until Christmas – sometimes a month or two after.

LSW: How did they get back and forth?

Lester: Well, the first time we moved up there, about 1926, it was by team and wagon.

LSW: How long did it take to travel back and forth to the mill?

Lester: We lived in Vernal at that time. It would take us one day to come from Vernal to Tridell and then another day from here up to the saw mill.

LSW: Did you go by way of the Turkey Trail?

Lester: Most of the time.

Fern: Didn't you sometimes camp between here and there. I have heard you talk about camping out a little bit before you got there.

Lester: The first time we moved up to the saw mill, it took us three days. The roads were new and it was early in the spring, after school was out, the last part of May. The roads were still a little soft, it was hard pulling. We had two wagons loaded with everything they could get on with supplies we had to take up. We spent one night on top of the 'red narrows' and then another night about a third of the way up the mountain. The last night was at Loggers cabin. My brother and his family went on in to the mill. Dad, mother and the family stayed at Loggers Cabin one night.

LSW: Is the road still pretty much the same as it used to be?

Lester: Ya, it is about the same. It has been improved a lot. But it is about in the same place. When you go around what we used to call the Yellow Pine switch back, there was real sharp turn there. When the first trucks went up there, they would have to go part way and then back up a little bit to make the turn. Now they have widened it out and straightened it and made it a lot better.

LSW: Fern, what kind of talents and skills do you think you have developed over the years.

Fern: Well, I have always liked to sew, which I can't do anymore. I have crocheted and have done embroidery work and I do knitting and things like that. You might say more my hobby. Then I have done a lot of teaching – church teaching young people, children in primary – MIA.

I didn't ever really have a desire to teach school, but it was alright to teach church classes. I served on the Primary Stake Board for a few years when we still belonged to the Uintah Stake. And then I also served as secretary of the Stake Relief Society when we were in the Roosevelt Stake.

LSW: Did you ever have any special pets or livestock you were fond of?

Lester: Well, no livestock. I suppose one special pet that I had was a cat. A tom cat. He was black and white just about like our cat we got now. But whenever I would go out to milk the cow he would follow me. He had to have milk while I was milking, so I would squirt milk in his mouth.

Fern: We almost always had dogs, living on a farm. I remember cats too, but I don't know of any of them I can think would be special, but we did have pets.

LSW: What did you do in your free time? Working on the farm and in the timber, you didn't have a lot of free time. Did you do anything special with your friends?

Fern: Well, when we were teenagers, we used to have a lot of parties. We didn't have TV, we didn't have movies to go to, and so we had parties. Just a group of us would get together and we'd have a party. In the summer time it was mostly weeny roasts. We would roast weenies and marshmallows and just have a good time together. In the winter time sometimes we would have parties at different homes. Sometimes it was

card games or things like that, just have fun. We just made, you might say, our own fun. And then we did have dances at the church quite often. We don't do it anymore – that was special. There would always be a special dance on the holidays and things like that. If the boys didn't ask us to dance then sometimes us girls would dance with each other.

Lester: Like I said, there is always fishing to do when I was up in the mountain. Then a lot of times, in the evening, we would go out to the sawdust fire, where we'd burn the sawdust and take some potatoes and rake out a few hot coals and we'd roast potatoes. Then we'd have card games too, in the evening around the big kitchen table. There was always something to do; hike or. One thing we used to enjoy was to walk around the ranger station – there was a pole fence all the way around the ranger station and the pasture, and we'd walk around there.

LSW: Up on the top rail of the fence?

Lester: Ya, the fence was up high off the ground. The logs weren't little poles; they were pretty good size logs. We would walk all the way around without getting off. It used to be a challenge to see if we could go around without falling off or had to get off.

LSW: Did you make it all the way around?

Lester: Oh, ya, several times. It was probably, maybe, a half a mile around it. Maybe more than that – it was a good size pasture.

LSW: That is interesting. Did you have a favorite subject in school – other than shop?

Lester: Well, I don't know. But I was pretty good in mathematics. I don't remember any other. While I was in high school I took chemistry and physics. At the time they were always kind of interesting to me.

Fern: Well, I don't think mine was mathematics, not that I had any problem with it, but that was not my favorite. I think probably the English classes. I liked to read. Anything that had to do with reading I was always interested in and I also liked spelling; even penmanship, which they don't teach anymore. One thing I remembered (I was saying that we had some good teachers here in Tridell); when I was in high school, the principal made the remark, "I can tell which kids come from Tridell because they got their 'basics'." That is what he called it. So our teachers were good to give us those 'basics' that were really needed.

LSW: What are some of the challenges you faced when you got out of high school?

Lester: Well, I think the biggest challenge, within a couple years, was the boys going into the army. If you didn't enlist, you were drafted, so that was probably the biggest challenge.

LSW: Did you serve in the army?

Lester: Ya, I served three years in the army. Two years of it in Europe, eighteen months in England and six months on the continent in France and Germany and Belgium. It was after the war was over when I got over there on the continent. And it was kind of a sight-seeing trip for us. We didn't have anything to do a lot of times. In Belgium they had a good ball diamond place. We had to march to get there, about a mile or so.

LSW: Where in Belgium were you?

Lester: Verviers, Belgium. We went from there up into Germany and the thing I remember about Germany is a lot of the cities were almost completely level – bombed out.

LSW: So you went over after the war?

Lester: Ya, it was after the war. We landed in France the day the war was over with Germany. I was never in the fighting units. I was always in the supply troop. We kept the troops serviced. I was 'ordinance' and that meant we serviced a lot of big guns and kept trucks and other vehicles going. But it was a good experience, but I wouldn't want to do it again.

LSW: Fern – what do you remember?

Fern: Mostly, when I got out of high school, I guess about the first thing I did was to help the ladies here in the ward when they had their babies. In those days they didn't have all these mechanical things they have now so they almost always needed some help when their babies were born so I spent quite a bit of time just to help whoever needed me or wanted me. But I did go to Salt Lake City and work for a while and then after Lester left, we were engaged before he left to go in the service. We were engaged three years before we got married because he was overseas all that time.

I went to Salt Lake to work for a while right after he left. He had been gone about a year when I went to California. I had a brother that lived in California, his wife was having a new baby and he wanted me to come and help her. So, he paid my trip down there - it was on a bus. I went and helped them for a while. My sister that lived down there too, and her husband, worked in an aircraft plant. They got me a job there. I was down there for 13 months all together, I think. But I learned to be a welder.

Lester: Welding on aluminum too – Aluminum is hard to weld!

Fern: So I did that for a while and then I finally decided to come home. I got real homesick – so I came home. I told the manager of the plant I wanted to go home for a while. He said, "well, I'm not gonna release ya, I'm just gonna give you a couple of weeks off and then if you decide to come back your job is here." But when I got home I decided I didn't want to go clear back down there again. So I just wrote him a letter and said I wouldn't be coming back. It's probably a good thing because right shortly after that they started laying some of the workers off. So I may have had a job and maybe not.

But the rest of the time myself, and Iris (she was a McConkie). She was my best friend, you might say. We grew up going to school together all the way through school and we were just kind of – we had other friends – but we were the closest. But she was married to Shardon Morrill and he was in the service. So she was here and we decided we'd go to Salt Lake. We didn't even have a job or anything out there; we just took the bus and went out to Salt Lake. We wouldn't dare do that now days or let our kids do it. We got out there and thought, we would try and find us a place to stay overnight and it was on a weekend. There were all these soldiers from the Air Force in town. They said, "Are you looking for a place to stay?", and we said, "Yes". They said, "You won't find one, we've been all over and we can't find one." So we went back to the bus depot and stayed there the rest of the night on the chairs. We went out the next day and did find a little place for us to live; then we had to go find jobs. But it didn't take us too long, we found jobs and stayed out there for quite a while working. But that was kind of a fun experience. It was good, but I don't know if I would want to go through it again.

LSW: What is your favorite place to visit for holidays or vacations?

Lester: I don't know if we've ever had a favorite place or not. We have been to several places around Utah and into some of the neighboring states.

LSW: Of all the places I have been, my favorite place is still Paradise.

Fern: We could probably say that too.

Lester: I could probably say that too because every chance we get we go up there. We didn't get up there last summer, though.

Fern: I spent a little time in the mountains when I was growing up because my dad was a farmer. He would sometimes go up there and help cut trees. One time he was trying to get material to build a better house than what we had. And so our family would go up and stay with him some of the time. Sometimes my mother would go up for a while and then some of us girls would go up for a while. So we spent quite a bit of time in Paradise Park, but not like the Bartlett family did, staying up there every summer.

LSW: Is there any other place that you have visited?

Lester: Well, I don't know. Of course we have always liked to go to Temple Square in Salt Lake when we get a chance, any place that is around the mountains. Lot of times we would go over to Flaming Gorge and places like that and to the Dinosaur Quarry.

Lester: Ya, I remember my first time to go down to Green River. I went down with my dad and brother. My brother had an old Model T Ford that was kind of like a pickup, room enough for two in the front and one or probably two in the back. But one time in February they wanted to go down to the Green River to look at some machinery down there, before I started school so I had to go with them; they couldn't leave me home. So they bundled me up in the back of the old model T and we went down as far as we



could go (there was about six or eight inches of snow) out past the Dinosaur Quarry, straight east from there and we went down the river and walked across the river on the ice. It was so cold the ice was all the way across the river. We went there on the bank of the river. It was up a ways - the old mining dredge was where they were mining gold. They never did make a go of it so they sold the machinery for taxes. My dad and brother bought the steam engine and boiler and that is what they used to run the saw mill up at Paradise.

Anytime I got a chance to go with dad and my brother somewhere – it was always fun for me.

LSW: What did you enjoy most about being a parent?

Lester: Probably I enjoyed most would be getting them raised and having them come back for a visit. Of course we enjoyed our family. There is no greater blessing than having a family.

LSW: How many children did you have?

Fern: Seven

Lester: We enjoyed our family. There is always something challenging with a family.

Fern: Of course having a handicap child like we have was a challenge too, ya know. We don't know why he was born like he was – nobody seems to know. I think he was just supposed to come to us, to help us. Why he is still alive I don't know, he comes to church – he is on dialyses and has been for nine years now, and yet he is still doing well. Things will happen and we think, oh, he can't possibly pull through this and he still comes around. He might outlive us yet.

LSW: Does he live in Roosevelt?

Fern: Yes, he and another young man rent a house, it's a small house. There are people that come in and help them with everything that they can't do for themselves. He is on the Rise program. They take them where they need to go and do things with them. They have some responsibilities that they do themselves – like washing dishes, laundry and help keep the house picked up a little bit and vacuum. He can do things like that.

LSW: Do you still have family reunions with your children?

Fern: Not as frequent as we should. Usually at Thanksgiving time is when we've been trying to get together.

LSW: What have you learned most from your life experiences?

Lester: Oh, I don't know, probably how to work and learn how to be joyful. You can't enjoy life if you are a grouch all the time. You have to learn how to be joyful and get along

with other people and of course, living like we should – like we’ve been taught, is very important. And never turn down a job that you can do. You know it might be difficult, but never turn it down.

Fern: Well, when you are a mother you learn a lot from just being a mother, just trying to set a good example for your family and trying to help them so that they’ll stay close to the church. But, I guess you learn, we all learn, as we go along, no matter.

LSW: Do you have any special phrases that you say or that are prominent with your family?

Lester: I don’t know what to say, I’ve got so many of them – my mind’s gone blank now.

Fern: You learn as you raise your family and try to teach them the things they need to know as well as set the example but, I know when I left to go to California, before we were married, I’d been taught in the church all my life, my parents were good members. At that time there were not very many LDS people in California. The church was fairly new down there so I knew what I’d be up against. Growing up here where it was all LDS, I made up my mind before I left that I would live the way that my parents taught me to live and tried to while I was there. Set an example for those I met.

LSW: What kind of advice would you give some of the youth now days?

Lester: I think probably the most important advice would be to live like you’ve been taught and to live clean. One thing my mother told me as I left home to go into the service. She said, “be clean, I’d druther have you not come back if you’re not – how did she put it – she wanted me to be clean like I left or not come back all.” I can’t remember how she said it. My dad used to say “remember who you are”, “remember who you are.”

LSW: Lester, can you tell me about some of the other saw mills that were around the area? There was a mill on the Blanchett Park road, just past the mill pond. Tom and Louise were there when it burned down. Do you remember who owned that mill?

Lester: Uh – I’m not sure, but I think it was Shelton, Nort Shelton, that owned that mill. He had a portable mill and he moved it around quite a bit. He had it set up one time at Loggers Cabin and I think he had two or three places where he set it up there on the road to Blanchett Park. I think there was another fellow that went in there too but I don’t remember who he was.

LSW: Didn’t Hen Lee have one just below the little lily pond?

Lester: Ya, that’s the one that my dad and brother bought. It was the old Hen Lee saw mill. We were there at that setting for about three years. They bought it in 1927. We were there 27, 28 and 29. They moved it over Paradise during the fall of 29 and that winter. When the family moved back up in 1930, the mill and shed and everything was all built. The houses where we lived were all built, so they had done all that during the fall and winter.

Then there was another prominent mill up there, the Nyberg mill. Neldon Nyberg had a saw mill a little way south of Paradise, about three miles or something like that. That's about all the mills that were there while we were up there. There were others that moved in with the portable mills, all the way from 1940 up to - oh, I don't know when they stopped, in the 1980's I suppose, and moved all the mills out. Great Lake timber cut a lot of timber up on the mountain.

LSW: Great Lake out of LaPoint?

Lester: Ya, I worked for them for 18 years as a mechanic and millwright. The boss laid me off because I was having health problems.

Fern: The thing of it is, the boss is dead now, and has been for quite a while, and Lester is still alive.

Lester: He was a younger man than I was by quite a bit.

LSW: Was that Mr. Sweeney?

Lester: Ya

LSW: Are there any other things that you can think of that I have missed?

Lester: One thing I might say about – I've always liked to be around the smell of fresh sawed logs and timber. That is the reason I went back to the saw mills. It was always something I enjoyed. I've done everything around a sawmill I think, that there was to be done, around the small mills. The bigger mills I haven't had much experience, but I've hauled logs. I operated the planer and stuff like that. That's one thing, when we had the mill at Paradise, I helped my dad; we had to plane lumber. I'd help him plane lumber and then for about five years (five summers) I fired the boiler to make steam to run the steam engine.

LSW: Thank you so much for your time.

Lester and Fern wanted to include their church service. They gave me the information and it is as follows:

Fern served as Primary secretary and teacher and was a counselor to Ruth Goodrich. She also served as a teacher and secretary in M.I.A. (Young Women). She was called to be the Ward Relief Society President and then served as secretary of the Stake Relief Society.

Lester wrote the following: I have held all the Ward positions there were in the Tridell Ward;  
Assistant Scout Master for about a year, 1941 to 1942

Scout Master from January 1946 to October 1952

Sunday School teacher from January 1946 to January 1953

Superintendent YMMIA from October 1952 to October 1957

Secretary of the 4<sup>th</sup> Quorum of Elders, Uintah Stake from September 1951 to August 1954

Made a Seventy in August 1954

and called as assistant Secretary and Historian of the 97<sup>th</sup> Quorum of Seventy and was released on June 29, 1957

Served in the Uintah Basin Indian Mission October 16, 1957 and was released on September 5, 1959.

He was sustained as one of the seven Presidents of the 97<sup>th</sup> Quorum of Seventy on June 29, 1958

Cub Master on March 20, 1960

Ward Clerk on August 2, 1959, then released on October 29, 1961

November 3, 1961 he was ordained a High Priest and then set apart as Bishop of Tridell Ward of the Ashley Stake by Milton R. Hunter. Duane McKee was first counselor and Ray Haslem second counselor, Farrell Simmons was Ward Clerk. He served as Bishop for almost five years, with the same counselors and clerk and was released as Bishop on September 18, 1966

Scout Master on September 25, 1966 and released in August 22, 1971

Sunday School Teacher January 29, 1967 and released June 6, 1971

Lester said he enjoyed working with the Scouts but found that he was not as agile as he was in his early years. He had a hard time keeping up with the boys.

Ward Executive Secretary August 22, 1971 – released September 17, 1972

YMMIA President September 17, 1972 – released on June 10, 1973

Stake High Counselor in Ashley Stake on March 25, 1973. Set apart by Pres. Jack Sietz. Spent two years in the Ashley Stake High Council.

March 9, 1975 Tridell Ward was moved into the Roosevelt Stake and on this day he was sustained a member of the Roosevelt Stake High Council and set apart by Pres. Calvin R. Kowallis. All of the years that he served as a High Counselor in the Roosevelt Stake, he was the Priesthood Advisor to the Stake Relief Society. He filled many speaking assignments to the Wards and Branches in the Stake and was assigned as an advisor to all the Wards and Elders Quorums at different times.

December 11, 1983 a new Stake was organized from the Roosevelt Stake and Tridell Ward was put into the new stake. He was released, after serving 11 years, from the High Council.

Lester and Fern have lived all their married life in one Ward (Tridell Ward), but have lived in four Stakes; Uintah, Ashley, Roosevelt and Roosevelt East.